

Budget Formulation System (BFS)

Communications Plan



Version 1.2

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1.0 Plan Objective

The objective of this BFS Communications Plan is to clearly lay out a plan for communication of the Budget Formulation System (BFS) information to all major stakeholders which will facilitate effective project participation – requirements development, testing, training, implementation – and ultimately greater acceptance. A well-managed project will bring value to the Agency in the form of a modern, efficient system that integrates budget processes.

2.0 Communications Plan Description

The BFS Communications Plan describes the approaches, procedures, and mechanisms to communicate BFS project information to interested stakeholders across the agency. This plan is intended to structure the communications approach and describe the scope, key activities, messages and associated timelines in order to deliver current, consistent, and relevant information about the BFS project to the user community, senior management, staff, and other stakeholders.

The scope of the BFS Communications Plan will increase as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gains other federal agencies as external customers.

3.0 Budget Formulation System Definition

The Budget Formulation System is the EPA's shared-service system enabling EPA agency staff and other federal agencies staff to formulate budgets, integrate budgets with strategic and annual performance plans, track financial actuals against established budgets, model future payroll needs, allocate costs, and other budgetary functions. BFS is a cloud based, internet application which allows agency staff to access it virtually from anywhere. The system is built in a flexible structure which allows it to be easily customized to accommodate any budget structure and to respond quickly to constantly changing OMB and Congressional requirements.

4.0 BFS Effort Summary Description

EPA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO), Office of Budget (OB), Systems and Information Management Staff (SIMS) is replacing EPA's Budget Automation System (BAS), with an expected fully functional BFS in January 2019. In the meantime, BFS functionality is being made available in phases starting with resource data entry and ad hoc reporting in December 2015. Online training, in-person training, and guidance memos were used to inform the budget user community on these new capabilities.

The BFS effort is designed to integrate all facets of budgeting and performance into one application. Currently various budget and performance processes are scattered throughout EPA's applications. For example, the OMB submission and Congressional Justification are currently completed in Lotus Notes. With BFS, this process will be brought under BFS's Budget Document Preparation module. BFS will have new functions such as the Budget Document Preparation module, as well as core functions from BAS that will be carried over and improved upon, including the performance module.

Currently, BFS is being offered as a shared service provider to other agencies. Outreach has begun, and mutual interest with several agencies is present. EPA plans to engage with these interested agencies and technically consult with them as they develop their own vision of BFS for their agency.

5.0 Background

Since 1999, EPA has used BAS to formulate budgets and assist in budgetary decision making. Additional functions have been added to BAS since its inception, but the system and its underlying technology have outlived its expected lifecycle. The client server structure is outdated and no longer serves our increasingly mobile workforce and the demands of today's budgetary world. The new BFS, formulation, execution, and performance system utilizes cloud and other modern technologies. Development began in 2014 and continues through early 2019 using an agile project management software approach. Agile development is an iterative process where development is done in "sprints" which are short development cycles of 4 to 6 weeks. These sprints include requirements gathering, UAT testing, and implementation of fixes found while testing. This approach entails phased releases which will occur when functionality becomes available and provides for incrementally increasing functionality and a comprehensive feedback loop from users to ensure their needs are met. BAS will be retired when BFS is fully operational.

6.0 Related Efforts

The BFS project is most closely linked to the Account Code Structure (ACS) project. Due to EPA's complex codes and additional statutory requirements (DATA Act and FITARA), BFS was developed in the new Account Code Structure. Any delays of the ACS schedule directly impact the BFS schedule. These schedules and any associated delays will be communicated with stakeholders. Related efforts also include the Lotus Notes Replacement effort and the Payroll Cost Allocation efforts. The Lotus Notes retirement process may impact the BFS schedule and the agency's PCA may impact BFS reporting.

The BFS project also includes a joint effort with the Office of Performance, Analysis, and Accountability (OPAA) in developing the BFS performance module. Housed under the same application as BFS, the performance module will share data with BFS, but maintain its independence as a separate module with requirements and any needed updates led by OPAA.

7.0 Major Benefits

- Integrated budget processes that work in synergy:
 - Flexible data entry structure
 - Internal budgeting for every organization
 - Payroll Projection module
 - Multi Version (scenario) forecasting
 - Sub-program data call (ex. lab costs) functionality integrated
 - New Account Code Structure will make reporting better in that stakeholders can report on discreet fields in the ACS
- Streamlined Infrastructure:
 - Web application accessible from anywhere
 - Cloud environment reduces burden on agency infrastructure

- Reduces cost in maintaining servers and coordinating .dll file updates with regions
- Shared service is an attractive feature for the entire Federal government

8.0 BFS Project Challenges

Like any new system in the federal landscape, BFS faces tough challenges that affect the system's success.

Below are some specific challenges:

- ACS Implementation Delays: BFS is configured for the new ACS, delays for the ACS create added cost and changes to the BFS implementation schedule
- Engaging other agencies: Generating interest from other agencies to build a foundation for BFS. Presently SIMS staff demonstrates BFS to interested agencies who contact EPA staff. Staff also present at cross government forums such as the Budget Formulation Execution Line of Business (BFELoB) to generate interest.
- Building in other agencies requirements: Once BFS modules are implemented, if other agencies desire changes this could create additional costs.

9.0 Communications Goals

- Inform stakeholders of BFS project plans, requirements, schedules and major releases
 - Provide CCB information and decision points as needed.
- Work with the OCFO IO Communications Staff to communicate BFS information to the agency's Technology User Group (TUG)
- Communicate accurate and up-to-date information about the project to agency stakeholders.
- Train users by:
 - Developing user's manuals
 - Developing online individual trainings
 - Offering webinar and in class training sessions
 - Inform users about new features in new releases using the BFS Bytes newsletter
 - Providing information to agency stakeholders through OCFO's FINRs Sharepoint site
- Facilitate a smooth transition from BAS to BFS
 - Inform stakeholders and users of the impending transition
- Target affected users by:
 - Planning on how best to reach certain user groups
 - Designating specific communication vehicles to inform particular groups such as Sharepoint and a group email inbox
- Engage Other Agencies
 - Consult with other agencies in designing and developing their vision of BFS

10.0 Target Audience(s)

The primary target audience includes the all EPA staff with responsibilities in resource management who provide data for the formulation, execution, or performance processes. Others need information as updates at a more summary level and only for major milestones. It is important to define the full list so we can ensure effective communication at appropriate stages of the project.

Positions

- Senior Resources Official (SRO)
- OCFO Leadership
- OCFO Staff
- System Managers
- Regional Comptrollers
- Senior Budget Officers (SBOs)
- HQ Performance Planners
- Regional Planners Network
- BFS User Community
- Agency Performance Community

Organizations

- Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)
 - Immediate Office
 - Office of Budget
 - Office of Planning, Analysis, and Accountability
 - Office of Technology Solutions
- Office of Environmental Information (OEI)
- National Program Managers (NPMs)
- Regions
- Federal Budget Community
- Federal Planning Community
- Lab Cost Workgroup
- Other specialty workgroups such as the international data call workgroup as needed

For each group of positions and organization the Communications Group will attempt to capture how BFS will improve their ability to work. It is important to reinforce the message of why EPA is implementing BFS. Technical systems communication with OEI and OTS also will be provided as needed.

11.0 Messengers

- OCFO Chief Financial Officer (CFO) & Deputy Chief Financial Officer (DCFO): Inform agency of major milestones.
- Senior Information Officer (SIO): Formal communications with OEI.
- Primary Information Security Officer (PISO): Communicate/Facilitate security requirements with OEI.
- Information Management Officer (IMO): Coordinate information and SLCM technical requirements with OEI.
- OB Director: Delivers high level information regarding BFS and relates it to the budget process.
- OPAA Director: Delivers high level information regarding BFS and related performance information/processes.
- OB/SIMS Staff: Delivers information and training to the budget user community regarding BFS.
- OPAA Staff: Delivers information and training to the performance user community regarding BFS.

12.0 Roles of OB & OPAA

- OB will coordinate with the budget user community, SBOs, Regional Comptrollers, and other agencies as appropriate to define the communications strategy, set milestones, and seek input in the development of communications products.
- OB will communicate with Component Resource Administrators on their role for their office.
- OB will coordinate with OTS as needed for data interfaces.
- OB will communicate with other agencies to get their requirements included into their vision of BFS.
- OPAA will coordinate with the performance user community and other agencies to define the communications strategy, set milestones, and assist in the development of communications products.

13.0 BFS Communications Team

The BFS Budget Communications Team plans and develops BFS budget communications strategies and products. Current members include: Jackye Herzfeld, Derek Chin, Laurel Ajabi, Consandra Fox, and Eric Kim.

The BFS Performance Communications Team plans and develops BFS performance communications strategies and products. Current members include: Billy Faggart and Dominic Nelson.

14.0 Key Messages

BFS Elevator Speech: OCFO is transitioning EPA's budget and performance system from BAS to BFS in order to provide a 21st century web application that provides additional functions for agency resource management and integrates with the ACS.

Overarching Messages:

- Integrated Budgeting and Performance Management: All aspects of budgeting and performance are consolidated under the Budget Formulation System.
- Functions for Resource Management:
 - Payroll Projections: Provides for a standardized module and method for projecting payroll.
 - Local Budget Development: Provides for offices to develop lower level budgets without OCFO being involved.
 - Multi Version Resource Data Entry Screen: Allows for offices to input into numerous versions and years within one data entry screen to allow for scenario forecasting.
 - Budget Execution Modules: BFS will have a reprogramming module and be able to interface with Compass to load budgets, reprogrammings, and reference data.
 - Budget Document Preparation: BFS will replace Lotus Notes Databases that are used to generate budget documents such as the OMB Submission and Congressional Justification.
 - Sub Program Data Call Interface: BFS allows for integration of sub program data calls such as lab costs and international resource tracking.
- Shared Service: BFS is set up in EPA's Working Capital Fund (WCF) to accommodate other agencies
- Flexibility: BFS improves user's ability to customize settings such as resetting their passwords through the website and rearranging the Resource Data Entry screen to a preferred view.
- Cloud: BFS is in the Microsoft Azure government cloud environment

- ACS: BFS is designed in the new Account Code Structure which improves tracking, reporting, and managing data.
- Better Technology: BFS utilizes today's technology in order to be a functional web application.

15.0 Communications Channels

The BFS Communications Teams will use multiple communications channels to inform stakeholders, the budget community and the performance community of major milestones, next steps and opportunities to participate. Open communication will facilitate conversations that will aid in development and testing as well as identifying and resolving issues. The effort will leverage existing meetings, planning events and other mechanisms as well as organizing additional targeted activities as needed. In addition, technical communications regarding systems, architecture, requirements, security, and interfaces will be developed as needed.

The BFS Communications Team will work on four major types of communications:

- 1) Push communications to provide information to stakeholders via email, newsletters, memos, and announcements
- 2) Pull communications that users can readily access via SharePoint and the BFS website to download FAQs, training materials, user manuals, list of POCs, etc.
- 3) Regular Change Control Board (CCB) meetings to discuss feedback and change requests with the user community
- 4) Technical communication regarding systems, architecture, requirements, security, and interfaces with OEI, OTS, and ORIM.

OCFO Communications SharePoint: A BFS sub-page of the OCFO Communications SharePoint site houses all relevant information about BFS, including announcements, training opportunities, contacts, documentation, and more.

- [REDACTED]

In addition, BFS performance related information can be found at the following SharePoint site:

- [REDACTED]

BFS Website: The BFS website login page hosts key information for users including: an about section, upcoming events, training resources, and support information. While logged into BFS' landing page, quick links to familiar EPA websites, online trainings, user manuals, and alerts can be found in addition to the previously listed items.

- [REDACTED]

Outlook BFS Inbox: This inbox is used to communicate to BFS user's information and BFS trainings. Users can email this inbox to ask BFS questions.

CCB Meetings: BFS will use existing CCB meetings to provide status updates, present any major decision points, and discuss stakeholders' requests for changes to BFS and the vision of how the system should operate

BFS Performance Meetings: The BFS Performance Communications Team reports out to stakeholders on development progress and will continue to meet with stakeholders on the BFS performance module progress.

Interagency Meetings & Cross Government Forums: Meetings and demonstrations will be set up as needed with other agencies to discuss fulfilling their system requirements. Participation at cross government forums such as the BFELoB provides opportunities to discuss and demonstrate BFS to interested federal partners.

16.0 Recommended Activities

Communication notifications to inform managers and employees about important announcements including but not limited to the following:

Written Notifications:

- BFS Bytes Newsletter
- BFS Internal System Alerts
- Emails from the OCFO-BFS_BAS-Support mailbox
- BFS Budget SharePoint Site
- BFS Performance SharePoint Site
- Memos from the OB Director
- Memos from the OPAA Director
- Technical systems communication to OEI and OCFO/OTS

17.0 Major Products

- Memoranda & Guidance
 - OB Director memos regarding BFS and how it relates to the budget process
 - OPAA Director memos regarding BFS and how it relates to the performance process
 - Technical guidance on behalf of the BFS Communications Team
- Key Messages
 - Elevator speeches
 - Major Advantages
- Documents
 - FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) to answer stakeholders' questions and describe potential benefits
 - User Manuals to walk users through functionalities
 - Training materials such as online training modules
- Schedule / Timeline
- Email, SharePoint, BFS Website Updates

Product Guidance Note – *Communications Products should be designed as much as practicable to be environmentally-friendly and cost efficient as possible by minimizing the need for color printing and other costly materials. Products should also minimize the use of jargon, define acronyms and phrases that may be unfamiliar to some readers and make products legible for readers.*

18.0 Communications Materials Development Process

The BFS Budget Communications Team will use a modified version of the Office of Budget's Communications materials development process.

1. Develop materials: The BFS Budget Communications Team (listed above in Section 13.0) will develop overall plans and related documents.
2. Review: The BFS Budget Communications Team members will vet materials via a review process.
3. OB Clearance: Workgroup will deliver high-level products for review to Deputy Director and Director, OB.
4. Additional clearances for any materials as needed will include: OCFO Communications Team, IMO, PISO, SIO, DCFO and CFO.

The BFS Performance Communications Team will use a modified version of the Office of Budget's Communications materials development process.

1. Develop materials: The BFS Performance Communications Team (listed above in Section 13.0) will develop overall plans and related documents.
2. Review: The BFS Performance Communications Team members will vet materials via a review process.
3. OPAA Clearance: Workgroup will deliver high-level products for review to Deputy Director and Director, OPAA.
4. Additional clearances for any materials as needed will include: OCFO Communications Team, IMO, PISO, SIO, DCFO and CFO.